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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DODE-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

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P 101615Z JUN 75
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9310
INFO USCINCEUR PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TUNIS 3506

4. EMBASSY INTERESTED IN STATEMENT STATE REFEL THAT
MOROCCANS RECENTLY WERE DEFLECTED FROM HAWK TO CHAPARRAL.
WE ARE UNAWARE OF NATURE OF MOROCCAN AIR DEFENSE
REQUIREMENTS (BUT PRESUMABLY MOROCCANS DECIDED THEY
DID NOT NEED FIXED INSTALLATION AIR DEFENSE.)
WHATEVER ARGUMENTATION WAS USED IN DEFLECTING MOROCCANS
WOULD BE USEFUL TO US. FURTHER, IF WE COULD TELL
TUNISIANS ABOUT MOROCCAN DECISION IT MIGHT LEND

STRENGTH TO OUR EFFORTS. LIBYAN ACQUISITION OF ADVANCED SOVIET FIGHTER-BOMBERS CAPABLE OF ATTACKING TUNISIAN AIRFIELDS, PORTS, ETC. IS ONE REASON FOR TUNISIAN DESIRE ACQUIRE LONG-RANGE, MEDIUM-ALTITUDE FIXED INSTALLATION DEFENSE CAPABILITY.

5. EMBASSY APPRECIATES FACT THAT HAWK HAS NOT PREVIOUSLY BEEN SOLD IN AFRICA. WOULD NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT TUNISIA IS A STRATEGICALLY-LOCATED MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRY, MOST OF WHOSE PROBLEMS ARE EITHER MEDITERRANEAN OR INTER-ARAB -- AND, IN ADDITION, THAT LEVEL OF TUNISIAN TECHNICAL COMPETENCE IS, ON THE WHOLE, HIGHER THAN THAT OF OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES. IN THE PRESENT CASE WHAT INSPIRES TUNISIAN CONCERN AND DESIRE FOR DEFENSIVE EQUIPMENT IS POSSIBLE THREAT FROM HEAVILY OVER-ARMED LIBYAN REGIME, ITSELF CONCERNED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY WITH INTER-ARAB MATTERS.
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EMBASSY HAS NO DESIRE TO PUSH TUNISIANS INTO ARMS RACE, AND WE BELIEVE TUNISIANS ARE ENTIRELY SERIOUS IN WISHING AVOID SUCH A SITUATION. WE HAVE ASSURED TUNISIAN LEADERSHIP, HERE AND DURING PRIMIN NOUIRA'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON, THAT OUR INTENTION TO BE FORTHCOMING WITH RESPECT TO THEIR REQUEST IN IN PART OWING TO DEFENSIVE NATURE OF EQUIPMENT SOUGHT.

6. AS SPELLED OUT IN TUNIS 2360, THE TUNISIANS ARE NOT RPT NOT SEEKING TO PURCHASE ENOUGH UNCONTROVERSIAL EQUIPMENT TO MAKE USE OF MORE THAN A FRACTION OF FMS CREDIT WE PROPOSE TO PROVIDE. USG'S OFFER OF SUCH CREDIT IS A HOLLOW GESTURE UNLESS AT SAME TIME WE CAN PERMIT TUNISIANS TO UTILIZE CREDITS FOR PURCHASE OF KINDS OF EQUIPMENT THEY BELIEVE THEY NEED. EMBASSY WILL DO ALL IT CAN TO DEFLECT THEIR INTEREST FROM HAWK WHEN DEPT HAS PROVIDED US INFORMATION TO MAKE A PERSUASIVE CASE, BUT DEPT SHOULD BE AWARE THAT WE RISK LEADING TUNISIANS TO THINK THAT SUPPORTIVE AND HELPFUL WORDS CONVEYED TO PRIMIN NOUIRA IN WASHINGTON ARE, A FEW WEEKS LATER, NOT RPT NOT BEING BACKED BY USG WILL TO BE HELPFUL WITH TUNISIAN DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS. WE STRONGLY URGE THAT DEPT NOT RULE OUT SALE OF HAWK SYSTEM TO GOT IF, DESPITE OUR EFFORTS, TUNISIANS REMAIN DETERMINED TO ACQUIRE THAT SYSTEM AND OBTAIN REQUISITE FUNDS (WHICH CURRENTLY SEEMS UNLIKELY).

7. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT DEPT CABLE US BEST AVAILABLE COSTING DATA TO EXPLAIN GREAT RECENT INCREASE IN COST OF HAWK SYSTEM, AND SUPPLY ANY ARGUMENTATION WE MIGHT USE IN ATTEMPTING DEFLECT GOT FROM HAWK, INCLUDING EXTENT TO WHICH WE MAY USE MOROCCAN DEFLECTION

AND REASONS FOR IT IN OUR TALK WITH TUNISIANS.

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